



Morning Alert - Friday, May 18, 2018

The following information reflects the reporting of the cited news media and does not reflect the opinions of the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo. Japan Media Highlights is intended for USG use only and should not be forwarded. Visit the website [here](#). For more information, contact TokyoMATT@state.gov.

HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK led with a report on an incident in which a Nihon University player tackled the Kwansei Gakuin University quarterback long after he released a pass. All commercial networks led with reports that singer Hideki Saijo died at the age of 63 on Wednesday.

Asahi, Yomiuri, and Sankei gave top play to reports on a GOJ plan to announce Japan's new era name around April 1, 2019, while Mainichi and Nikkei led with reports on an announcement by Toshiba that it will complete the sale of its chip business to a Japan-U.S.-South Korean consortium on June 1.

ECONOMY

Japan mulls countermeasures against U.S. tariffs on steel

All national dailies wrote that the GOJ is considering notifying the WTO that it plans to take countermeasures against the steel and aluminum tariffs imposed by the United States. Under WTO rules, when a country raises tariffs as a safeguard measure to protect domestic products, affected countries can take reciprocal steps. Asahi and Yomiuri speculated that Japan is planning to use the move as a tool in future trade talks with Washington, adding that the U.S. tariffs will probably be put on the agenda of the new trade talks between USTR Lighthizer and Economic Revitalization Minister Motegi that will be launched in mid-June.

Bill to approve TPP-11 to clear Lower House today

Asahi and Yomiuri wrote that the ruling coalition has decided to put a bill to ratify the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership to a vote at the Lower House Foreign Affairs Committee and submit it to the full Lower House for a vote today. After the approval by the

Lower House, the bill will likely be enacted during the current Diet session because it is set to be automatically enacted 30 days after the Lower House sends it to the Upper House. The ruling coalition also plans to approve a set of related bills at the Lower House Cabinet Committee today and at a Lower House plenary session on May 22. Asahi speculated that the GOJ is hoping that the completion of its domestic procedures to ratify the agreement will make it easier to persuade the United States to return to the TPP. The paper quoted Prime Minister Abe as saying at a Lower House Cabinet Committee meeting on Thursday that President Trump's stance on the TPP has slightly changed. The paper added that Japan plans to complete the domestic procedures before the new trade talks with the United States start in mid-June. Nikkei also quoted Abe as saying that he has stressed the merits of the TPP every time he has met with the President over the past year.

INTERNATIONAL

U.S. maintains stance of calling for complete denuclearization

Yomiuri wrote that National Security Advisor Bolton told Fox News Radio on Wednesday that if the DPRK has no intention to denuclearize, the United States will not make the mistakes of past administrations and fall into endless discussions with North Korea in which it asks for more benefits. The paper speculated that the Trump administration plans to maintain the maximum pressure campaign until Pyongyang takes concrete steps toward "complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization." The paper added that a White House spokesperson stated on Wednesday that the United States Government has not taken up for discussion as an official position the so-called Libya model for dismantling North Korea's nuclear weapons program. Sankei ran a similar story.

Pentagon says joint military drills to continue despite North Korea's call for cancellation

NHK reported on its website that although North Korea has called for the cancellation of the joint military drills between the U.S. and South Korean forces as a condition for resuming inter-Korean ministerial talks, Pentagon Chief Spokesperson White said on Thursday that the U.S. is planning to continue the exercises and that their scope will remain unchanged. The network said White also remarked that there are no discussions being held on changing the scope of the exercises in preparation for the June 12 summit.

SECURITY

Defense Secretary Mattis plans to visit Japan

Nikkei and Mainichi wrote that arrangements are being made for Secretary of Defense Mattis to visit Japan in late June for talks with Defense Minister Onodera on North Korea. Nikkei speculated that the two defense chiefs will confirm the policy of maintaining pressure on North Korea until it abandons its nuclear and ballistic missile programs following the planned U.S.-DPRK summit on June 12. Sankei ran a similar Kyodo story.

SOCIETY

State Department designates Japan as “country of noncompliance” with Hague convention

Nikkei ran a [Jiji](#) story from Washington saying that the Department of State released on Wednesday its annual report on nations’ compliance with the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. Noting that Japan is designated a “country of noncompliance” in the report, Jiji conjectured that the pressure on Japan to abide by the accord is likely to increase. The story added that the State Department report says Japan has made measurable progress on international parental child abduction since the convention came into force for Japan in 2014 and that a strong and productive relationship between the U.S. and Japanese governments facilitates the resolution of abduction cases. But it also noted that the report points out that there were no effective means to enforce the order to return abducted children and as a result of this failure, 22% of requests for the return of abducted children remained unsolved for more than 12 months.

